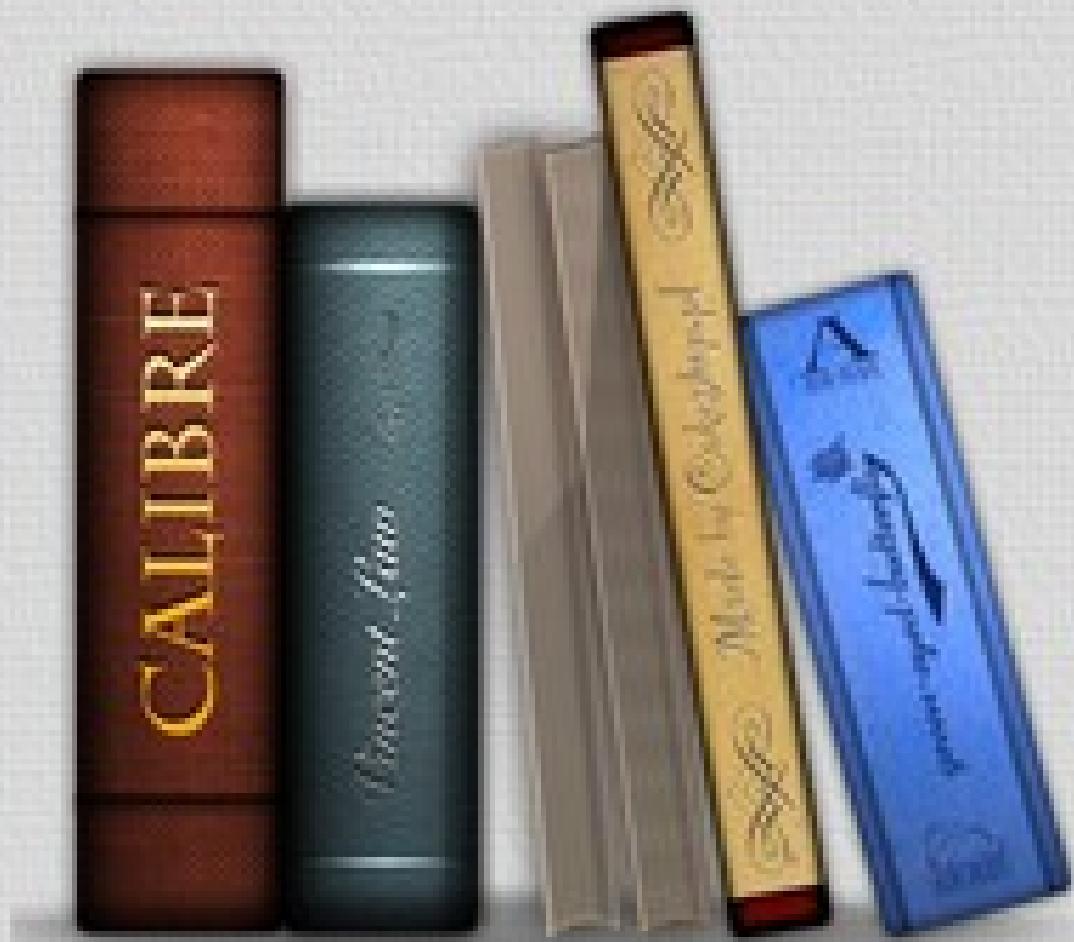


DGuzik 17 Esther

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The following events happened in the days of Ahasuerus. (I am referring to that Ahasuerus who used to rule over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces extending all the way from India to Ethiopia.)

Guzik - Esther 1:1-22

Esther 1 - A Queen Is Deposed

Esther is the last of the historical books of the Bible, so its main character is named Esther - that is, Venus, the morning star, which sheds its light after all the others stars have ceased to shine, and while the sun still delays to rise. Thus the deeds of Queen Esther cast a ray of light forward into Israel's history from a dark time.

A. King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) holds a big feast.

1. (1-2) King Ahasuerus and his domain.

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, a. **It came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus:**

This king **Ahasuerus** is well known to history, though more commonly under the name *Xerxes*. He inherited the vast Persian Empire from his father, Darius I (who is mentioned in passages such as Ezr. 4:24, 5:5-7, 6:1-15; Dan. 6:1 and 6:25; Hag. 1:15 and 2:10).

i. The fact of the existence of this king and circumstance is extremely well attested;

archaeologists have discovered the ruins of the very palace where these events happened.

b. **In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom:** At this time (approximately 483

B.C.), Ahasuerus was planning for a doomed invasion of Greece,

which would take place several years later. At this time the city of Athens was in its classical glory and in Greece they were celebrating the 79th Olympic games.

i. At this time, the Persian Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. It covered what we call today Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; and also parts of modern day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Arabia.

ii. Also at this time Ezra had returned to Jerusalem after it had been conquered by the Babylonians. The temple had been rebuilt some 30 years before, although more simply and without the glory of Solomon's temple.

iii. In 40 years, under the successor of Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes I), Nehemiah would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the previously conquered city.

2. (3-9) Three royal feasts.

*That in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants; the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him; when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all*. And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. There were white and blue linen *curtains* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a *mosaic* pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.*

And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women *in* the royal palace which *belonged* to King Ahasuerus.

a. **He made a feast for all his officials and servants:** The first feast was for all the government officials, where Ahasuerus showed off the glory and splendor of the riches of his kingdom. This feast lasted for 180 days.

b. **The king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel:** The second feast was for the citizens of the capital city, Sushan and it lasted for seven days.

i. The basic reason for these feasts was, of course, pride. The king wanted to impress his subjects with a great display of his own wealth and power and majesty and generosity. This is typical of the way that *the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them* (Mat. 20:25). There is little doubt that Ahasuerus paid for this feast out of the public treasury.

c. **There were white and blue linen curtains:** In the ancient Hebrew, the white material is literally described as "white stuff."

This may be evidence that Esther was written with a man's eye for decorating detail, not a woman's.

d. **In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory:** Among some of the ancients, each guest was obliged to have a drink with the current round, or else leave the party. At this second feast, the king command that each man could drink as he pleased.

e. **Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women:** The third feast was for the women in the royal palace, and was

conducted by the wife of king Ahasuerus, **Queen Vashti**.

B. Queen Vashti is deposed.

1. (10-11) King Ahasuerus demands that Vashti display her beauty before the guests at the feast.

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman,

Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the

presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen

Vashti before the king, *wearing* her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she *was* beautiful to behold.

a. **When the heart of the king was merry**

with wine: The clear implication is that Ahasuerus was drunk.

b. **To bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her**

royal crown: According to Jewish tradition, this request came from an argument among the men at the feast as to which country had the most beautiful women.

Ahasuerus decided to settle the issue by putting his wife the queen on public display.

c. **For she was beautiful to behold:** It is not specifically said, but the implication is that Vashti was expected to display herself in an immodest way.

2. (12) Queen Vashti refuses to appear before the drunken guests of the feast.

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command *brought* by *his* eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

a. **But Queen Vashti refused to come:** Though Vashti was by no means a follower of the true God, she had enough wisdom and modesty to know that this was something she should not do.

i. The Bible says that wives have a special responsibility to submit to their husbands

(*wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*; Eph. 5:22). Yet it does not mean that a wife must obey her husband if he commands her to sin. Every command to submit on a human level is conditioned by the higher obligation to obey God before man.

ii. However, it is important for a Christian in such a situation to maintain a submissive and respectful attitude towards the one in authority. It is possible to disobey the command of another, but do so in a submissive manner. It is impossible to say if Queen Vashti had this attitude in this situation.

iii. Jewish traditions say that her refusal had nothing to do with modesty. These stories say that she was ready to appear before the banqueters completely unclothed, except that God smote her with leprosy just as she received the request (an obviously fanciful tradition).

b. **Therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned:** Queen Vashti was therefore in a very dangerous situation. It does not seem that she put herself in this situation, because it seems that she was not even at this banquet.

i. Sadly, many women today put themselves in dangerous places, especially where alcohol is involved, showing a severe lack of wisdom. Nevertheless, it certainly gives no justification to the sin of men against an unwise woman in such a situation.

ii. "What woman, possessing even a common share of prudence and modesty, could consent to expose herself to the view of such a group of drunken Bacchanalians?

Her courage was equal to her modesty: she

would resist the royal mandate, rather than violate the rules of chaste decorum. . . .

Hail, noble woman! be thou a pattern to all thy sex on every similar occasion!" (Clarke) 3. (13-22) The banishment of Vashti.

Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this *was* the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom): "What *shall* we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her* by the eunuchs?" And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who *are* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.'

This very day the *noble* ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus *there will be* excessive contempt and wrath. If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small." And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to

each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

a. **That Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she:** When King Ahasuerus heeded this advice from Memucan, he showed himself to be unreasonable and wrong. He should have honored the dignity of his Queen. Yet, history's profile of Ahasuerus shows him to be an

unreasonable and foolish man in many cases.

i. On one occasion, Ahasuerus executed the builders of a bridge because an ocean storm destroyed it; then he commanded that the water and waves be whipped and chained to punish the sea.

b. **That each man should be master in his own house:** The purpose for the harsh treatment of Vashti was so that she would not set a bad example for the other women of Persia. Ahasuerus wanted to reinforce the idea of a man's leadership in the home.

i. They were afraid that because of Queen

Vashti's example, wives would **despise**

their husbands . . . that there would **be excessive contempt and wrath;** therefore they wanted to insure that **each man should be master in his own house.**

ii. The *goal* presented here was admirable, and speaks to the need within every man to sense respect and honor from his wife.

Paul's instruction to wives was summed up

like this: *let the wife see that she respects her husband* (Eph. 5:33). A wife's respect is the most precious gift she can give her husband.

iii. However, the *means* used here to gain and preserve this respect were foolish. A man cannot demand or coerce respect from

his wife - if it isn't freely given, then it isn't worth anything.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** In those days, as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa the citadel, **3** in the third year of his reign he provided a banquet for all his officials and his servants.

The army of Persia and Media was present, as well as the nobles and the officials of the provinces.

4 He displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his majestic greatness for a lengthy period of time - a hundred and eighty days, to be exact! **5** When those days were completed, the king then provided a seven-day banquet for all the people who were present in Susa the citadel, for those of highest standing to the most lowly. It was held in the court located in the garden of the royal palace. **6** The furnishings included linen and purple curtains hung by cords of the finest linen and purple wool on silver rings, alabaster columns, gold and silver couches displayed on a floor made of valuable stones of alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mineral stone. **7** Drinks were served in golden containers, all of which differed from one another. Royal wine was available in abundance at the king's expense. **8** There were no restrictions on the drinking, for the king had instructed all of his supervisors that they should do as everyone so desired. **9** Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in King Ahasuerus' royal palace.

10 On the seventh day, as King Ahasuerus was feeling the effects of the wine, he ordered Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who attended him, **11** to bring Queen Vashti into the king's presence wearing her royal high turban. He wanted to show the people and the officials her beauty, for she was very attractive. **12** But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's bidding conveyed through the eunuchs. Then the king became extremely angry, and his rage consumed him.

13 The king then inquired of the wise men who were discerners of the times – for it was the royal custom to confer with all those who were proficient in laws and legalities. **14** Those who were closest to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. These men were the seven officials of Persia and Media who saw the king on a regular basis and had the most prominent offices in the kingdom. **15** The king asked, “By law, what should be done to Queen Vashti in light of the fact that she has not obeyed the instructions of King Ahasuerus conveyed through the eunuchs?”

16 Memucan then replied to the king and the officials, “The wrong of Queen Vashti is not against the king alone, but against all the officials and all the people who are throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. **17** For the matter concerning the queen will spread to all the women, leading them to treat their husbands with contempt, saying, ‘When King Ahasuerus gave orders to bring Queen Vashti into his presence, she would not come.’ **18** And this very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media who have heard the matter concerning the queen will respond in the same way to all the royal officials, and there will be more than enough contempt and anger! **19** If the king is so inclined, let a royal edict go forth from him, and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media that cannot be repealed, that Vashti may not come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king convey her royalty to another who is more deserving than she. **20** And let the king’s decision which he will enact be disseminated throughout all his kingdom, vast though it is. Then all the women will give honor to their husbands, from the most prominent to the lowly.”

21 The matter seemed appropriate to the king and the officials. So the king acted on the advice of Memucan. **22** He sent letters throughout all the royal provinces, to each province according to its own script and to each people according to its own language, that every man should be

ruling his family and should be speaking the language of his own people.

1 When these things had been accomplished and the rage of King Ahasuerus had diminished, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decided against her.

Guzik - Esther 2:1-23

Esther 2 - Esther Is Chosen Queen

A. The gathering together of a harem for King Ahasuerus.

1. (1-4) A search is made for a replacement for Queen Vashti.

After these things, when the wrath of King

Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti,

what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

Then the king's servants who

attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them*. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

a. **After these things:** This is broader than just the events of the previous chapter. Est.

2:16 indicates that there was a four-year span between

chapters one and two. During that

time King Ahasuerus made his great,

unsuccessful invasion of Greece and he came home a defeated man, wanting to cheer his

heart through sensual diversions.

b. **Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king:**

The plan was to assemble a harem from the most beautiful women of the land; to bring them into a harem for the king, and to choose the most favored woman to be his queen from that group. This was sort of a

"Miss Persian Empire" contest, and the winner would **be queen instead of Vashti.**

c. **This thing pleased the king, and he did so:** The ancient Jewish historian Josephus says the Ahasuerus had a total of 400 women selected.

2. (5-7) Esther and her family.

In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. *Kish* had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother.

The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful.

When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

a. **There was a certain Jew whose name**

was Mordecai: Mordecai, the cousin of Esther, came to Persia in one of the waves of relocation that the Babylonians imposed on Judah when it conquered that land.

b. **And Mordecai had brought up**

Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: Esther (whose Jewish name

Hadassah means "Myrtle"; the Persian name *Esther* means "star") was raised by her cousin Mordecai since the death of her father and mother.

i. "In prophetic symbolism the myrtle would replace the briars and thorns of the desert, so depicting the Lord's forgiveness and acceptance of his people. (Isa. 41:19; 55:13; cf. Zec. 1:8)" (Baldwin)

ii. They were part of the large Jewish community that was forced to relocate out of Judah, and didn't decide to return with Ezra. In the day of Mordecai and Esther, the land of Judah was regarded as a wild and

backward place.

c. The young woman was lovely and beautiful:

The Hebrew for **lovely and beautiful** is literally, "beautiful in form and lovely to look at." Or, as the NIV has it, *lovely in form and features*.

i. We regard that the Bible is generally given to understatement; when it says that Esther was *lovely and beautiful*, we know that it isn't exaggerating.

3. (8) Esther is taken into the king's harem.

So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, *under the custody of Hegai*, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.

a. That Esther also was taken to the king's palace: It seems that Esther didn't really have a choice about this.

b. Into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women:

Hegai was the *king's eunuch* (Est.

2:3), a man entrusted with the oversight of the king's harem for obvious reasons.

i. According to Baldwin, Hegai is specifically mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus as being an officer of king Ahasuerus.

B. Esther in the courts of the king.

1. (9) Esther's favored treatment in the palace.

Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maid-servants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maid-servants to the best *place* in the house of the women.

a. Now the young woman pleased him,

and she obtained his favor: Esther *obtained favor* with Hegai, the man in authority over her.

In this, her godliness ensured a fulfillment of Pro. 3:3-4: *Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your*

neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.

b. **He readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance:** Because of this favor, Hegai gave Esther special beauty preparations, beyond **her allowance**. He also gave her **seven choice maidservants** to look after her beauty needs.

i. Esther was beautiful to begin with; now she looked like one of those "after" pictures from the glamour photo studios - and she looked that way all the time.

ii. The ancient Hebrew word for **beauty preparations** comes from the root "to scour, to polish." (Huey)

2. (10-11) Esther conceals her Jewish identity.

Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it*. And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

a. **Esther had not revealed her people or family:** Normally, there is never a good reason for hiding the fact that we are Christians. Far too many Christians act as if they are "secret agents" - and they always conceal who they are in the Lord.

i. We must take the warning Jesus gave in Mat. 10:32-33 seriously: *Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*

But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. We can't live a life of denial and expect God to recognize us.

b. **For Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it:** However, we do recognize that there are situations where God may have us be reticent about our Christian identity - not for the purposes of permanently concealing it, but

waiting for the opportune moment to reveal it. Apparently, this is what Mordecai sensed was right to do in this circumstance, and Esther agreed.

i. For example, in some situations one might initially act as if they know nothing when approached by a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon, and do it not to deny Jesus, but to seize a strategic opportunity.

c. **Every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare:** Mordecai's great interest in Esther's state shows his love and concern for her in such a potentially dangerous place.

3. (12-14) The method of preparing and presenting the women before the king is established.

Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. Thus

prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

a. **After she had completed twelve months' preparation:**

preparation: Persia was one of many countries famous for its aromatic perfumes and ancient customs for the preparations of brides, including ritualistic baths, plucking of the eyebrows, the painting of hands and feet with henna, facial make-up, and applications of a beautifying paste all

over the body, meant to lighten the color of the skin and to remove spots and blemishes.

i. One reason for the lengthy time of preparation was to tell if the women had been pregnant upon coming into the harem, so that the king would not be charged with fathering a child that was not his.

ii. Matthew Poole says that the oils and perfumes were necessary because "The bodies of men and women in those hot countries did of themselves yield very ill scents, if not corrected and qualified by art."

b. Thus prepared, each young woman

went to the king: It sounds wonderful - a year of constant spa treatments. Yet the destiny of these women should also be considered: one evening with the king. If he chose them from the 400 others to be his queen, then she would be his companion (until she displeased him). As for the 399 who lost, they were banished to the harem where they stayed the wife or the concubine of the king, but rarely if ever saw him afterwards. And they were never free to marry another man, essentially living as a perpetual widow.

4. (15-18) Esther is selected as queen.

Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised.

And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his

officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

a. **She requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised:** Esther's humble wisdom was shown in the way that she allowed the **custodian of the women** to assist her preparations.

b. **Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her:** This was because of *both* Esther's godliness and beauty.

i. Beauty often gains people (especially women) favor with others. This is a fact that Christians must accept, wisely teaching their children what really matters, and refusing to rely too much on beauty for our judgment of people.

c. **She obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins:** Because of the great favor that she obtained with the king, Esther was selected to be the queen to king Ahasuerus.

i. Esther's life so far has been remarkable.

She was the child of Jewish exiles, who both died; she was raised by her cousin in a foreign and often hostile land; she was taken by compulsion into the king's harem; she found favor with all whom she met; and she was finally selected to be the queen of the realm.

ii. This remarkable course of events wasn't an accident; it wasn't just because of luck or fortune or Esther's good looks or sparkling personality. God had a plan, and Esther is part of it. As Psa. 75:6-7 says: *For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.*

iii. In exactly the same way, we have a place in God's plan. Wherever you are at right now, God has a purpose for it - maybe a

short purpose, or a long one; perhaps a large purpose or a small purpose, but God has a reason.

iv. To this point, the story of Esther also shows us that in the outworking of His plan, God can use the evil of man. God did not make Ahasuerus drunk, or make him demand that his queen present herself in an immodest way before the lords of the kingdom; yet God allowed this wicked action of man to fulfill a purpose in His greater plan. We find assurance in the truth that no other person, no matter how evil they are, can defeat God's plan for our life, no matter what they have done to you or will do to you.

C. Mordecai saves the king's life.

1. (19-20) Mordecai's rise in prominence and Esther continues to conceal her Jewish identity.

When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. *Now* Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

a. **Mordecai sat within the king's gate:** This position indicates that Mordecai was associated with the decision makers and men of influence in the kingdom.

b. **Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her:** Some have thought that the book of Esther carries this idea of concealment too far. This book has been criticized because it does not mention the name of God (as neither does the Song of Solomon).

i. Some say that the name of God was left out of Esther because of its use in the festivities surrounding Purim, where people commonly became drunk. One rabbi taught:

"A man is obligated to drink on Purim until he is unable to distinguish between 'Blessed be Mordecai' and 'Cursed be Haman.'" Some have wondered if, in that atmosphere, it would be too easy to profane the name of God if it were to be read at such a festival.

ii. Others see the name YHWH hidden in acrostics, based on the initial and final letters of successive words in Est. 1:20, 5:4, 5:13, and 7:7. In some manuscripts, the letters in these words are written a bit larger to give them prominence.

iii. Perhaps also Esther does not contain the name of God because it was written under Persian rule, and for distribution in the Persian Empire.

iv. Most likely, Esther doesn't have the name of God because it shows how God works *behind* the scenes; God is always active in Esther, even though it is behind the scenes.

2. (21-23) Mordecai hears an assassination conspiracy and informs the king, saving the king's life. In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

a. **The matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king:**

Mordecai's attitude wasn't "I'm a Jewish man in exile under a pagan king, so I do not care if he is killed." Instead, he fulfilled Peter's thought in

1Pe. 2:17, before Peter ever wrote it: *Fear God. Honor the king.*

i. This threat of assassination was real.

Ahasuerus was eventually murdered by his prime minister, who placed Artaxerxes I on the throne.

b. **Both were hanged on a gallows:** The word **gallows** is literally *tree*; the idea that they were *hanged on a tree* probably refers not to a hanging with a noose around the neck, but to impalement on a stake, much like crucifixion.

i. "A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out through the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies." (Clarke)

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2 The king's servants who attended him said, "Let a search be conducted in the king's behalf for attractive young women. **3** And let the king appoint officers throughout all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the attractive young women to Susa the citadel, to the harem under the authority of Hegai, the king's eunuch who oversees the women, and let him provide whatever cosmetics they desire. **4** Let the young woman whom the king finds most attractive become queen in place of Vashti." This seemed like a good idea to the king, so he acted accordingly. **5** Now there happened to be a Jewish man in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai. He was the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite, **6** who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been carried into exile with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken

into exile. **7** Now he was acting as the guardian of Hadassah (that is, Esther), the daughter of his uncle, for neither her father nor her mother was alive. This young woman was very attractive and had a beautiful figure. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had raised her as if she were his own daughter.

8 It so happened that when the king's edict and his law became known many young women were taken to Susa the citadel to be placed under the authority of Hegai.

Esther also was taken to the royal palace to be under the authority of Hegai, who was overseeing the women. **9** This young woman pleased him, and she found favor with him. He quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her rations; he also provided her with the seven specially chosen young women who were from the palace. He then transferred her and her young women to the best quarters in the harem.

10 Now Esther had not disclosed her people or her lineage, for Mordecai had instructed her not to do so. **11**

And day after day Mordecai used to walk back and forth in front of the court of the harem in order to learn how Esther was doing and what might happen to her.

12 At the end of the twelve months that were required for the women, when the turn of each young woman arrived to go to King Ahasuerus - for in this way they had to fulfill their time of cosmetic treatment: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfume and various ointments used by women - **13** the woman would go to the king in the following way: Whatever she asked for would be provided for her to take with her from the harem to the royal palace. **14** In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to a separate part of the harem, to the authority of Shaashgaz the king's eunuch who was overseeing the concubines. She would not go back to the king unless the king was pleased with her and she was requested by name.

15 When it became the turn of Esther daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai (who had raised her as if she were his

own daughter) to go to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who was overseer of the women, had recommended. Yet Esther met with the approval of all who saw her. **16** Then Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus at his royal residence in the tenth month (that is, the month of Tebeth) in the seventh year of his reign. **17** And the king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she met with his loving approval more than all the other young women. So he placed the royal high turban on her head and appointed her queen in place of Vashti. **18** Then the king prepared a large banquet for all his officials and his servants - it was actually Esther's banquet. He also set aside a holiday for the provinces, and he provided for offerings at the king's expense.

19 Now when the young women were being gathered again, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. **20** Esther was still not divulging her lineage or her people, just as Mordecai had instructed her. Esther continued to do whatever Mordecai said, just as she had done when he was raising her.

21 In those days while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who protected the entrance, became angry and plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus. **22** When Mordecai learned of the conspiracy, he informed Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordecai's behalf. **23** The king then had the matter investigated and, finding it to be so, had the two conspirators hanged on a gallows. It was then recorded in the daily chronicles in the king's presence.

1 Some time later King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, exalting him and setting his position above that of all the officials who were with him.

Guzik - Esther 3:1-15

Esther 3 - Haman's Conspiracy

A. Haman determines to destroy the Jews.

1. (1) Haman's promotion.

After these things King Ahasuerus promoted

Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who *were* with him.

a. King Ahasuerus promoted Haman:

Haman was an ungodly man, but God had a purpose in allowing him to be promoted.

b. Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite:

Agagite: Haman was a descendant of Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites, the people who were Israel's sworn enemy for generations (Exo. 17:14-16).

2. (2-3) Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman or to pay him homage.

And all the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him.

But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.

Then the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

a. Mordecai would not bow or pay homage:

homage: There does not seem to be a Biblical command against bowing or paying homage to a political leader as a sign of respect (Gen.

18:2; 23:7; 43:26; Exo. 18:7; 2Sa. 16:4).

Rather, Mordecai must know something about this man Haman, which persuades him that Haman is unworthy of such honor - perhaps simply his ancestry.

i. "No self-respecting Benjaminite would bow before a descendant of the ancient

Amalekite enemy of the Jews." (Huey)

b. Why do you transgress the king's command?

command? We do not read of a specific command from King Ahasuerus that all had to bow before Haman. Perhaps the command was implied in the promotion he received (Est. 3:1).

3. (4-6) The wounded pride of Haman drives him to seek retribution against not only Mordecai and his people - the Jews.

Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told *it* to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for *Mordecai* had told them that he *was* a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus; the people of Mordecai.

a. **It happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman:** Apparently, Haman did not first notice Haman's stubborn resistance. It had to be pointed out to him by his aides.

b. **Haman was filled with wrath:** Haman was an extremely proud and insecure man; he could only consider himself a success if everyone else thought he was a success.

c. **Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom:** Haman's anger led him to take out his wrath upon **all the Jews** in the kingdom. The problem with Haman exposed his basic hatred for all Jewish people.

4. (7) Haman determines the exact date he will strike out against the Jews.

In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until *it fell on the twelfth month*, which *is* the month of Adar.

a. **The cast Pur:** This was the Persian word for **the lot**, something like dice, used to leave a decision to chance - or to the God who guides every chance.

b. **Until it fell on the twelfth month:** Since this took place **in the first month**, the casting of the lot determined that the Jews would not be attacked and massacred for at least 11 months.

i. This proves the truth of Pro. 16:33: *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.* The long delay between the first month and the month of massacre against the Jewish people was ordained by God.

B. Haman tells his plot to the king.

1. (8-9) Haman's proposal to king Ahasuerus.

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all *other* people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a *decree* be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries."

a. **Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus:** Haman's charge was the most dangerous

possible; it was a half-truth. Yes, the Jews were a **certain people scattered and dispersed**; and yes they had their own **laws**. But their own laws, to this point, did not prevent them from keeping the king's laws as loyal subjects.

i. In fact, Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman was *not* based on the law of God, but on the principle of personal integrity. It seems that Haman was almost completely unfamiliar with this principle of personal integrity.

b. **Let a decree be written that they be destroyed:**

Haman suggested organizing the mass murder of the Jewish people. Haman also neglected to tell king Ahasuerus how many of these **certain people** there were in

his kingdom; Ahasuerus probably considered this a relatively small threat.

c. **I will pay ten thousand talents of silver:** This was essentially the promise of a bribe. This money would not come from Haman's own pocket; it would be obtained from the property of slaughtered Jews.

2. (10-11) The king agrees to the plan.

So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

a. **The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you:** Again, king Ahasuerus probably had no idea what he agreed to; he probably believed that he merely agreed to the execution of a handful of dangerous revolutionaries in his kingdom.

3. (12-15) The decree is published.

Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a *decree* was written according to all that Haman commanded; to the king's satraps, to the governors who *were* over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring.

And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth *month*, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in

Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

a. **To destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day:** With this, an empire-wide death sentence on the Jews was announced by the king. This was like other attacks against the Jewish people in history, except that it was announced well in advance.

b. **So the king and Haman sat down to drink:** When the king **sat down to drink**, he thought he had done well - but he did not really understand what he had done. Haman also **sat down to drink**, and thought he had done well - and he knew exactly what he intended to do. Despite this, **the city of Shushan was perplexed.**

i. The citizens of the empire knew Jewish people who lived among them, and they knew that they were good citizens who caused no trouble. Therefore, they were confused that such a decree came forth, declaring that these Jews were dangerous enemies.

ii. Again, all this came to pass because of the insecurity and wounded pride of one wicked man - Haman.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** As a result, all the king's servants who were at the king's gate were bowing and paying homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded. However, Mordecai did not bow, nor did he pay him homage.

3 Then the servants of the king who were at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you violating the king's commandment?" **4** And after they had spoken to him day after day without his paying any attention to them, they informed Haman to see whether this attitude on Mordecai's

part would be permitted. Furthermore, he had disclosed to them that he was a Jew. **5** When Haman saw that Mordecai was not bowing or paying homage to him, he was filled with rage. **6** But the thought of striking out against Mordecai alone was repugnant to him, for he had been informed of the identity of Mordecai's people. So Haman sought to destroy all the Jews (that is, the people of Mordecai) who were in all the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month (that is, the month of Nisan), in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus' reign, *pur* (that is, the lot) was cast before Haman in order to determine a day and a month. It turned out to be the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar).

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a particular people that is dispersed and spread among the inhabitants throughout all the provinces of your kingdom whose laws differ from those of all other peoples.

Furthermore, they do not observe the king's laws. It is not appropriate for the king to provide a haven for them. **9** If the king is so inclined, let an edict be issued to destroy them. I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to be conveyed to the king's treasuries for the officials who carry out this business."

10 So the king removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, who was hostile toward the Jews. **11** The king replied to Haman, "Keep your money, and do with those people whatever you wish."

12 So the royal scribes were summoned in the first month, on the thirteenth day of the month. Everything Haman commanded was written to the king's satraps and governors who were in every province and to the officials of every people, province by province according to its script and people by people according to its language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written and sealed with the king's signet ring. **13** Letters were sent by the runners to all the

king's provinces stating that they should destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, from youth to elderly, both women and children, on a particular day, namely the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar), and to loot and plunder their possessions. **14** A copy of this edict was to be presented as law throughout every province; it was to be made known to all the inhabitants, so that they would be prepared for this day.

15 The messengers scurried forth with the king's order. The edict was issued in Susa the citadel. While the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in an uproar!

1 Now when Mordecai became aware of all that had been done, he tore his garments and put on sackcloth and ashes. He went out into the city, crying out in a loud and bitter voice.

Guzik - Esther 4:1-17

Esther 4 - Esther's Decision

A. Mordecai's mourning.

1. (1-3) He and the rest of the Jews lament their fate.

When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

a. **He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes:** Though Mordecai was anguished at all this, we remember also that his integrity was the cause of it. He **cried out with a loud and bitter cry**, but he would not change his mind grovel at the feet of Haman to save himself or his people.

i. This was not only because of the personal integrity of Mordecai, but also because he

knew the character of the laws of the Persians - that they could not be changed once decreed (Est. 1:19).

b. There was great mourning among the

Jews: Mordecai's reaction was imitated all over the Persian Empire in public expressions of grief and horror.

2. (4-7) Mordecai explains the problem to Esther.

So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was*. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

a. Esther's maids and eunuchs came and

told her: Esther, living in the isolation of the palace, had not yet been made aware of this decree. Before she understood the decree, she could not understand why her cousin Mordecai made such a spectacle of himself.

b. And the sum of money that Haman had

promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy

the Jews: Mordecai was well aware of the money motive that made king Ahasuerus receptive to this evil plan.

B. Mordecai's request.

1. (8-12) His first request and Esther's appeal to him in response.

He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Then Esther

spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

a. That he might show it to Esther and

explain it to her: After giving a copy of the decree to Esther through a courier, Mordecai challenged her to intercede on behalf of her people before the king.

b. Any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death: Esther explained the difficulty behind this - she was only allowed to come to the king when called, and if she came on her own, she could be executed for daring to approach the king without an invitation.

i. Apparently, the life of a queen of Persia was not one of great intimacy with the king.

Esther said, "**I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days**" - meaning she had not seen her husband for an entire month.

2. (13-14) Mordecai's second request.

And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

a. Do not think in your heart that you will escape:

Mordecai reminded Esther that she could not remain insulated from this decree anymore than anyone else.

b. If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place: Mordecai's trust was in the faithfulness of God, not in the faithfulness of Esther. He knows that God will not let His people down, even if individuals let God down.

c. But you and your father's house will perish: Mordecai reminded Esther that though the fate of God's people rested in God and not in her, her *own fate* depended on her own faithfulness to God.

d. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Mordecai knew that God had promoted this orphan in exile for a reason - and Esther must have the courage and wisdom to see that reason and fulfill it.

i. This principle applies to us also. God promotes us or puts us in a place for a reason, and we need the courage and wisdom to see that reason and to walk in it.

ii. "You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve him where you are." (Spurgeon)

iii. "I believe that in dark times God is making lamps with which to remove the gloom. Martin Luther is sitting by his father's hearth in the forest when the Pope is selling his wicked indulgences: he will come out soon, and stop the crowing of the cock of the Romish Christ-denying Peter. John Calvin is quietly studying when false doctrine is most rife, and he will be heard of at Geneva.

A young man is here this morning - I do not know whereabouts he is, but I pray the Lord to make this to be an ordination sermon to him, starting him on his life-work. I feel as if I were Samuel at Bethlehem, seedlings for

David, to anoint him with a horn of oil in the name of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

3. (15-17) Esther's decision.

Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

a. **Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me:** Taking the determination of the Lord, Esther decided that she would go and make a bold appearance before the king, but only if she was supported by prayer and fasting.

i. Jesus reminded us that special spiritual battles sometimes require special preparation with prayer and fasting.

Regarding a stubborn case of demonic possession, He said *this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting* (Mat. 17:20).

b. **And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!**

Esther carried a bold attitude towards her mission. She was determined to be obedient, no matter what the cost.

i. Jesus exhorted us to have the same attitude: *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul* (Mat. 10:28). Paul was also an example of this attitude: *To live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Phi. 1:21).

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** But he went no further than the king's gate, for no one was permitted to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. **3** Throughout each and every province where the king's edict and law were announced there was

considerable mourning among the Jews, along with fasting, weeping, and sorrow. Sackcloth and ashes were characteristic of many. **4** When Esther's female attendants and her eunuchs came and informed her about Mordecai's behavior, the queen was overcome with anguish. Although she sent garments for Mordecai to put on so that he could remove his sackcloth, he would not accept them. **5** So Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been placed at her service, and instructed him to find out the cause and reason for Mordecai's behavior. **6** So Hathach went to Mordecai at the plaza of the city in front of the king's gate. **7** Then Mordecai related to him everything that had happened to him, even the specific amount of money that Haman had offered to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews to be destroyed. **8** He also gave him a written copy of the law that had been disseminated in Susa for their destruction so that he could show it to Esther and talk to her about it. He also gave instructions that she should go to the king to implore him and petition him on behalf of her people. **9** So Hathach returned and related Mordecai's instructions to Esther.

10 Then Esther replied to Hathach with instructions for Mordecai: **11** "All the servants of the king and the people of the king's provinces know that there is only one law applicable to any man or woman who comes uninvited to the king in the inner court - that person will be put to death, unless the king extends to him the gold scepter, permitting him to be spared. Now I have not been invited to come to the king for some thirty days!"

12 When Esther's reply was conveyed to Mordecai, **13** he said to take back this answer to Esther: **14** "Don't imagine that because you are part of the king's household you will be the one Jew who will escape. If you keep quiet at this time, liberation and protection for the Jews will appear from another source, while you and your father's household

perish. It may very well be that you have achieved royal status for such a time as this!"

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast in my behalf. Don't eat and don't drink for three days, night or day. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. Afterward I will go to the king, even though it violates the law. If I perish, I perish!"

17 So Mordecai set out to do everything that Esther had instructed him.

1 It so happened that on the third day Esther put on her royal attire and stood in the inner court of the palace, opposite the king's quarters. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the palace, opposite the entrance.

Guzik - Esther 5:1-14

Esther 5 - Esther's Bold Request

A. The first banquet.

1. (1-5) Esther invites both king Ahasuerus and Haman to this banquet.

Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her royal robes* and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that *was* in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What *is* your request? It shall be given to you; up to half the kingdom!" So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him." Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

a. **Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace:** Esther showed courage

in her willingness to appear before the king without being summoned by him. This took special courage because King Ahasuerus did not have a good reputation for treating his queens well.

b. If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him:

Esther also showed tact by not blurting out her ultimate request right away. She wanted to first win the king's confidence in her - and she wanted Haman at the banquet to ultimately expose his wickedness.

2. (6-8) Esther's request at the first banquet.

At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you.

What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request *is this*: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

a. What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done! King Ahasuerus repeated this offer to Queen Esther.

It was more of a proverbial expression than a literal offer for anything up to **half of the kingdom**.

b. Let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said:

Esther put off the request for one more day, promising to reveal her petition at a second banquet on the next day.

i. It may be that Esther could not find the courage to present her request, and used

the successive banquets as a delaying tactic.

"Some of us are very unaccountable, but on that woman's unaccountable silence far

more was hanging than appears at first sight. Doubtless she longed to bring out her secret, but the words came not. God was in it; it was not the right time to speak, and therefore she was led to put off her disclosure. I dare say she regretted it, and wondered when she should be able to come to the point, but the Lord knew best." (Spurgeon)

B. Haman's plot against Mordecai.

1. (9-13) Haman's frustration with Mordecai.

So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him

above the officials and servants of the king.

Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

a. **He was filled with indignation against Mordecai:** Miserable Haman! Honored by both the King and Queen of Persia, the disapproval of one man makes him feel worthless. This is an accurate description of how empty the rewards of this world are.

i. Haman's deep seated insecurities and need to be honored by *everybody* means that he can never be happy; God meant this hunger for acceptance in each of us to be

ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ - because we are *accepted in the Beloved* (Eph. 1:6), accepted before God because of who we are in Jesus.

b. **Nevertheless Haman restrained himself:** This is a remarkable evidence of the hand of God. God would not allow the fury of Haman to take action until all the proper pieces were set in place to ultimately defeat his plan.

c. **Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate:** Haman's problem wasn't

Mordecai, it was the emptiness in his own heart.

Even if he solved the "Mordecai problem," it would not fill the emptiness in his heart.

i. "The soul was made for God, and nothing but God can fill it and make it happy." (Clarke)

2. (14) Haman happily receives counsel to ask for Mordecai's execution the next day at the second feast.

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet." And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

a. **Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it:** For these friends of Haman, it wasn't enough to just punish Mordecai's people (remember the genocide against the Jews is already set in motion), or merely to kill Mordecai. They

wanted Haman to ask for a public, humiliating execution of Mordecai on gallows 75 feet (25 meters) high.

i. The **gallows** mentioned here was not for *hanging* a victim, but for violently killing and displaying the victim. "A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then

pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out through the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies." (Clarke)

b. And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made: We should never underestimate the destructive and distorting power of hatred. The same irrational, violent hatred that made Haman want to see Mordecai hang to his death is the same irrational, violent hatred that made man want to hang Jesus on a cross.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she met with his approval. The king extended to Esther the gold scepter that was in his hand, and Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

3 The king said to her, "What is on your mind, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even as much as half the kingdom will be given to you!"

4 Esther replied, "If the king is so inclined, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him." **5** The king replied, "Find Haman quickly so that we can do as Esther requests."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. **6** While at the banquet of wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your request? It shall be given to you. What is your petition? Ask for as much as half the kingdom, and it shall be done!"

7 Esther responded, "My request and my petition is this: **8** If I have found favor in the king's sight and if the king is inclined to grant my request and perform my petition, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet that I

will prepare for them. At that time I will do as the king wishes.

9 Now Haman went forth that day pleased and very much encouraged. But when Haman saw Mordecai at the king's gate, and he did not rise nor tremble in his presence, Haman was filled with rage toward Mordecai. **10**

But Haman restrained himself and went on to his home. He then sent for his friends to join him, along with his wife Zeresh. **11** Haman then recounted to them his fabulous wealth, his many sons, and how the king had magnified him and exalted him over the king's other officials and servants. **12** Haman said, "Furthermore, Queen Esther invited only me to accompany the king to the banquet that she prepared! And also tomorrow I am invited along with the king. **13** Yet all of this fails to satisfy me so long as I have to see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

14 Haman's wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows seventy-five feet high built, and in the morning tell the king that Mordecai should be hanged on it. Then go with the king to the banquet contented."

It seemed like a good idea to Haman, so he had the gallows built.

1 Throughout that night the king was unable to sleep, so he asked for the book containing the historical records to be brought. As the records were being read in the king's presence, Guzik - Esther 6:1-14

Esther 6 - Honor for Mordecai

A. The king's question.

1. (1-3) A sleepless night.

That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's

servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

a. **The king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles:**

King Ahasuerus did what many do when they cannot sleep. He brought out a book and used it to fill the sleepless night, hoping that the reading will make him sleepy again.

i. "Ahasuerus is master of one hundred and twenty and seven provinces, but not master of ten minutes' sleep." (Spurgeon)

b. **And it was found written:** This was a remarkable example of Providence in action.

King Ahasuerus can not sleep, and he can choose 20 different diversions to fill his sleepless night - but he commands that a book be brought to him and read. The one commanded to bring the book could have brought any one book of the **records of the chronicles**, but he brought one particular book.

The book could be opened to any page, but it was opened to the exact page telling the story of Mordecai and how he saved the King from assassination. God guided every step along the way.

i. Even as king Ahasuerus had a **book of the records of the chronicles** (literally a *book of remembrance*), so God also has a book of remembrance: *Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a*

book of remembrance was written before

Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. (Mal. 3:16)

c. What honor or dignity has been

bestowed on Mordecai for this? Showing rare concern for a common subject, King

Ahasuerus considered a reward for Mordecai.

2. (4-5) Haman in the courts of the king.

So the king said, "Who *is* in the court?" Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said,

"Let him come in."

a. Now Haman had just entered the outer

court: It was no *coincidence* that Haman entered the king's court at just that moment; it was no *coincidence* that Haman came at that moment to ask for the execution of Mordecai; it was no *coincidence* that king Ahasuerus wanted to honor Mordecai at just that moment.

b. Haman is there, standing in the court: If this Book of Esther shows us anything, it shows us that God manages the affairs of men, even without their knowledge. God knows what He is doing and in the courts of heaven there are no coincidences or surprises.

i. Esther wasn't *lucky* to be queen; Mordecai wasn't *lucky* to have overheard the assassination plot; it wasn't *luck* or *chance* that made Haman enter the royal courts at this time with this heart. All of these events were orchestrated by God and not by luck.

ii. This becomes difficult, of course, when *bad* things happen to us. It is easy to see God's management of all things when we

see good things happen. But what about the bad? Even then, we must trust God's total plan, realizing that *all things work together for god to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose* (Rom. 8:28). We understand that Paul says *all things work together*; any one event, taken in isolation may seem to make no sense, but when we see all things working together we then see the ultimate wisdom of God's plan.

3. (6) King Ahasuerus asks a question of Haman.

So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

a. What shall be done for the man whom

the king delights to honor? God arranged all things, so that not only will all the Jews be ultimately protected, but also so that both Mordecai and Haman would get what was coming to them.

b. Whom would the king delight to honor

more than me? God often allows fallen man to set his own trap; allowing Haman to make his pride and arrogance be the cause of his ultimate humiliation.

4. (7-9) Haman's answer on how the king should honor the man who pleases the king.

And Haman answered the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then

parade him on horseback through the city

square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"

a. **For the man whom the king delights to honor, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn . . . :** Haman, in his childish desire to be praised and honored by all, asked for things that really mattered very little, except to puff one up with pride.

b. **Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!** Haman was a tragic man who can only believe he has done well when he heard applause. It is a good and sometimes appropriate thing to have applause here on earth, but it is tragic to live your life seeking for it. We should instead seek and be satisfied with the applause from heaven.

B. The king's command.

1. (10-11) Haman must lead the chorus of praise for Mordecai.

Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken." So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"

a. **Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for**

Mordecai the Jew: It would have been something to see the face of Haman at that moment; to see that the king took his advice completely, but gave the honor to his arch enemy - the man that Haman came to ask for his execution.

b. **So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on**

horseback through the city square: The ultimate humiliation was for Haman to honor Mordecai in such a public way; humiliation is only really humiliation when it is *public*.

2. (12-14) Mourning, warning, and a hasty departure to Esther's banquet.

Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate.

But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife

Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him." While they *were* still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

a. **Mourning, and with his head covered:** This means that Haman acted as if someone dear to him had died. In fact, his pride had been dealt a death-blow.

b. **You will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him:** Haman's wife and his advisors could see the future well enough.

Haman would not prevail against Mordecai, but Mordecai would prevail over Haman.

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2 it was found written that Mordecai had disclosed that Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, had plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus.

3 The king asked, "What great honor was bestowed on Mordecai because of this?" The king's attendants who served him responded, "Not a thing was done for him."

4 Then the king said, "Who is that in the courtyard?"

Now Haman had come to the outer courtyard of the palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had constructed for him. **5** The king's attendants said to him, "It is Haman who is standing in the courtyard." The king said, "Let him enter."

6 So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor?" Haman thought to himself, "Who is it that the king would want to honor more than me?" **7** So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king wishes to honor, **8** let them bring royal attire which the king himself has worn and a horse on which the king himself has ridden - one bearing the royal insignia! **9** Then let this clothing and this horse be given to one of the king's noble officials. Let him then clothe the man whom the king wishes to honor, and let him lead him about through the plaza of the city on the horse, calling before him, 'So shall it be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!'"

10 The king then said to Haman, "Go quickly! Take the clothing and the horse, just as you have described, and do as you just indicated to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Don't neglect a single thing of all that you have said."

11 So Haman took the clothing and the horse, and he clothed Mordecai. He led him about on the horse throughout the plaza of the city, calling before him, "So shall it be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!"

12 Then Mordecai again sat at the king's gate, while Haman hurried away to his home, mournful and with a veil over his head. **13** Haman then related to his wife Zeresh and to all his friends everything that had happened to him.

These wise men, along with his wife Zeresh, said to him, "If indeed this Mordecai before whom you have begun to fall is Jewish, you will not prevail against him. No, you will surely fall before him!"

14 While they were still speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived. They quickly brought Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

1 So the king and Haman came to dine with Queen Esther.

Guzik - Esther 7:1-10

Esther 7 - Haman's End

A. The second banquet.

1. (1-4) Esther finally makes her request: please spare my life!

So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What *is* your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you.

And what *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be

annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."

a. **Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:** Esther, even when she finally made her request, showed

great tact. She did not immediately identify herself as a Jew, targeted for massacre - even as Haman also hid the identity of the group he targeted when he made his request (Est. 3:8).

b. **Let my life be given me at my petition:** Esther also showed wisdom in how she framed her request. She appealed on a *personal* basis, knowing that she has never done anything but please the king.

2. (5) The king's reaction: who is this wicked man?

So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his

heart to do such a thing?"

a. **Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a**

thing? Ahasuerus perhaps should have known that it was actually he himself who authorized such a plan. He was the one who gave

authorization to Haman to carry out this plot (Est. 3:10-11), though he did it in ignorance.

3. (6) Esther identifies the guilty party.

And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

a. **The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!**

Esther exposed the truth about Haman

- that he was not a faithful servant of the king, he was instead an **adversary and enemy**, more interested in his own fame and status than the benefit of the king.

b. **So Haman was terrified before the king and queen:**

Haman never imagined that *Esther* was a Jew; now he stood before the king being rightly accused of plotting the murder of the king's wife.

i. Now the wisdom of Esther's strange request to invite Haman to these banquets can be seen; it maximized the impact upon both the king and upon Haman himself.

B. Haman's wretched end.

1. (7-8) Haman's doom is sealed.

Then the king arose in his wrath from the

banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther *was*. Then the king said,

"Will he also assault the queen while I *am* in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

a. **Then the king arose in his wrath:** The king was filled with **wrath**; probably because he now realized that Haman had played him for a dupe in getting this decree to kill the Jews in effect.

b. **Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?** For all of Haman's pleading, he only got himself into deeper trouble - now he was accused of personally assaulting Esther!

i. A Jewish writing says that the angel Gabriel pushed Haman so he fell on Esther's couch just as king Ahasuerus was coming back into the room.

c. **They covered Haman's face:** Haman's head was covered as a preparation for execution.

2. (9-10) The execution of Haman.

Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!" So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.

a. **Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high:** As in the case of the people executed in Est. 2:23, Haman was probably not hanged with a rope

around his neck; he was impaled on a huge stake in an ancient precursor of crucifixion.

b. **Which Haman made for Mordecai:**

Haman found his end on the same instrument he had intended for the death of Mordecai; he was caught in his own trap against Mordecai.

i. God often works this way and we should pray as the Psalmist did: *Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into*

the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown. (Psa.

7:14-16)

ii. Perhaps the greatest example of this was when Satan thought that he won by getting the crowd to crucify Jesus, but the cross turned out to be the instrument of his defeat.

c. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then

the king's wrath subsided: The death of a substitute satisfied the **wrath** of the king. In the case of Mordecai and Haman, it was the guilty dying in the place of the innocent; in the case of us and Jesus, it is a matter of the innocent dying in the place of guilty.

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2 On the second day of the banquet of wine the king asked Esther, "What is your request, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your petition? Ask up to half the kingdom, and it shall be done!"

3 Queen Esther replied, "If I have met with your approval, O king, and if the king is so inclined, grant me my life as my request, and my people as my petition. **4** For we have been sold - both I and my people - to destruction and to slaughter and to annihilation! If we had simply been sold as male and female slaves, I would have remained silent, for such distress would not have been sufficient for troubling the king." **5** Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, "Who is this individual? Where is this person to be found who is presumptuous enough to act in this way?"

6 Esther replied, "The oppressor and enemy is this evil Haman!"

Then Haman became terrified in the presence of the king and queen. **7** In rage the king arose from the banquet of wine and withdrew to the palace garden. Meanwhile, Haman stood to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he realized that the king had now determined a catastrophic end for him.

8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet of wine, Haman was throwing himself down on the couch where Esther was lying. The king exclaimed, "Will he also attempt to rape the queen while I am still in the building!"

As these words left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. **9** Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Indeed, there is the gallows that Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke out in the king's behalf. It stands near Haman's home and is seventy-five feet high."

The king said, "Hang him on it!" **10** So they hanged Haman on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. The king's rage then abated.

1 On that same day King Ahasuerus gave the estate of Haman, that adversary of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Now Mordecai had come before the king, for Esther had revealed how he was related to her.

Guzik - Esther 8:1-17

Esther 8 - A Proclamation to Help the Jews

A. The appeal to the king.

1. (1-2) Haman's home is given to Esther; his position is given to Mordecai.

On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related* to her. So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

a. **On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman:** Haman, the disturbed man who had seemingly achieved

everything, ended with nothing - nothing even to pass on to his family. One might say that he had climbed the ladder of success, but it was leaning against the wrong building.

b. So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and

gave it to Mordecai: Think of how hard Haman had to work to achieve all he did. Yet it was all for nothing; it was all a waste.

i. He should have lived his life after the conclusion of Solomon, who carefully considered these things: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is*

man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecc. 12:13-14)

2. (3-6) Esther's request for the salvation of her people.

Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to

counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing *seems* right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite,

which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

a. Implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the

Jews: Esther asked that the previous decree requiring the extermination of the Jews be revoked.

b. Let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman:

Haman: This was the request we might have expected to come back at Est. 5:4, where Esther was first invited to make her

request to king Ahasuerus. Yet God's wisdom operating in her life gave her the tact and ability to approach this great request in stages.

i. Even though Haman was defeated, the decree of the king still stood against the Jews. How could God's people be preserved when a decree of the king cannot be revoked (according to Est. 1:19)?

3. (7-14) King Ahasuerus makes a counter-decree, allowing the Jews to protect themselves on the day they were scheduled for annihilation.

Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he *tried to* lay his hand on the Jews. You yourselves write *a decree* concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke." So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which *is* the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third *day*; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces *in all*, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed *it* with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds. By

these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together and protect their lives; to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of Adar. A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command.

And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

a. You yourselves write a decree

concerning the Jews, as you please: The king could not revoke the previous decree, so he simply made another decree giving support to the Jews against their attackers.

i. We might think of Haman as in the place of our enemy, Satan, and joyfully await the day God puts him away. But we still must deal with the righteous decree of God that demands our death: *The soul who sins shall die* (Eze. 18:4). In our sins, we not only have an enemy (Satan), but we also have a legal decree from a righteous God against us.

i. God solves the problem, not by compromising His decree for eternal justice, but by fulfilling justice in taking the punishment we deserved - His counter-decree saves us; *that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus* (Rom. 3:26).

b. The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command:

There was an urgency to get the word out about this

important decree of the king. Christians should show a similar

urgency when it comes to being heralds of the decree that the justice of God has been satisfied for us in Jesus Christ.

B. Mordecai's advancement.

1. (15) Mordecai's promotion.

So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

a. **So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel:** God's purpose in all these matters goes farther than the sparing of the Jews from destruction; He also purposed to raise up Mordecai as the prime minister - as a replacement of Haman.

2. (16) Joy for the people of God.

The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.

a. **The Jews had light and gladness:** This joy came *before* the actual day appointed when the Jews would be attacked, yet able to defend themselves. Nevertheless, because of the decree of the king, they can be assured of victory and rejoice in it ahead of time.

b. **Light and gladness, joy and honor:** In the same way, our course is not yet run; our salvation is not yet complete - yet we can

rejoice, because of our confidence in our king - *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* (Phi. 1:6)

3. (17) Salvation for the Gentiles.
And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

a. **Then many of the people of the land**

became Jews: As they saw God working on behalf of His people, they wanted the same

relationship with God.

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2 The king then removed his signet ring (the very one he had taken back from Haman) and gave it to Mordecai.

And Esther designated Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's estate.

3 Then Esther again spoke with the king, falling at his feet. She wept and begged him for mercy, that he might nullify the evil of Haman the Agagite which he had intended against the Jews. **4** When the king extended to Esther the gold scepter, she arose and stood before the king. **5** She said, "If the king is so inclined and if I have met with his approval and if the matter is agreeable to the king and if I am attractive to him, let an edict be written rescinding those recorded intentions of Haman the son of Hamedatha, the Agagite, which he wrote in order to destroy the Jews who are throughout all the king's provinces. **6** For how can I watch the calamity that will befall my people, and how can I watch the destruction of my relatives?"

7 King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have already given Haman's estate to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he took hostile action against the Jews. **8** Now you write in the king's name whatever in your opinion is appropriate concerning the Jews and seal it with the king's signet ring. Any decree that is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring cannot be rescinded.

9 The king's scribes were quickly summoned - in the third month (that is, the month of Sivan), on the twenty-third day. They wrote out everything that Mordecai instructed to the Jews and to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces all the way from India to Ethiopia - a hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all - to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, and to

the Jews according to their own script and their own language. **10**

Mordecai wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He then sent letters by couriers on horses, who rode royal horses that were very swift.

11 The king thereby allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and to stand up for themselves - to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any army of whatever people or province that should become their adversaries, including their women and children, and to confiscate their property.

12 This was to take place on a certain day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus - namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar). **13** A copy of the edict was to be presented as law throughout each and every province and made known to all peoples, so that the Jews might be prepared on that day to avenge themselves from their enemies.

14 The couriers who were riding the royal horses went forth with the king's edict without delay. And the law was presented in Susa the citadel as well.

15 Now Mordecai went out from the king's presence in purple and white royal attire, with a large golden crown and a purple linen mantle. The city of Susa shouted with joy. **16** For the Jews there was radiant happiness and joyous honor.

17 Throughout every province and throughout every city where the king's edict and his law arrived, the Jews experienced happiness and joy, banquets and holidays. Many of the resident peoples pretended to be Jews, because the fear of the Jews had overcome them.

1 In the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar), on its thirteenth day, the edict of the king and his law were to be executed. It was on this day that the enemies of the Jews had supposed that they would gain power over them.

But contrary to expectations, the Jews gained power over their enemies.

Guzik - Esther 9:1-32

Esther 9 - Victory for the Jews

A. They defeat their enemies.

1. (1-5) Victory, with the help of the king.

Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be

executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves

overpowered those who hated them. The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

a. **On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred:**

The Jews definitely had their enemies, those who wished to destroy them. Yet they had someone great on their side: the king, with all his resources. With the king for them, it didn't matter who was against them.

b. **Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies:**

We have our own enemies to deal with; but with the King of Kings on our side, we have no reason to fear - *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom. 8:31)

2. (6-10) Cities where they fought their enemies.

And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha; the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews; they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

3. (11-17) At the king's invitation, Esther asks for the complete defeat of all the enemies of the Jews.

On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king.

And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman.

What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request?

It shall be done." Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to

today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in

Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

And the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. *This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth day of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

a. If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again

**tomorrow according to today's decree,
and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on**

the gallows: Many have criticized Esther for this, saying it showed a lack of love towards her enemies. Yet she displays the same principle found so often in Joshua - she would not settle for less than total victory.

b. And they hanged Haman's ten sons: Haman and his sons were descendants of the ancient Amalekites (comparing Est. 3:1 and 1Sa. 15:8-33). God commanded Saul, the son of Kish, to execute the full extend of God's judgment against the Amalekites (1Sa. 15:2-3).

Samuel failed; but this later descendent of the tribe of Benjamin and a son of Kish named Mordecai (Est. 2:5-6) completed God's judgment against the Amalekites.

i. "Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek: the conflict which began with Joshua in the desert was to be finished by Mordecai in the king's palace." (Spurgeon) B. The feast of Purim established.

1. (18-19) A great celebration among the Jews of the Persian Empire.

But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

2. (20-32) The institution of the feast of Purim. And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King

Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending

presents to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, the Jews established and

imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time, *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among

their descendants. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven

provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting.* So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

a. Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King

Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly: The principle of remembering God's great deliverance is good; we too often forget His great works.

b. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim: Today, Purim is one of the more popular Jewish feasts, with costumes, games and noise.

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2 The Jews assembled themselves in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to strike out against those who were seeking their harm. No one was able to stand before them, for dread of them fell on all the peoples.

3 All the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who performed the king's business were assisting the Jews, for the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. **4** Mordecai was of high rank in the king's palace, and word about him was spreading throughout all the provinces. His influence continued to become greater and greater. **5** The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, bringing death and destruction, and they did as they pleased with their enemies.

6 In Susa the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. **7** In addition, they also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, **8** Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, **9**

Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha, **10** the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not confiscate their property.

11 On that same day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was brought to the king's attention. **12** Then the king said to Queen Esther, "In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman! What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? What is your request? It shall be given to you. What other petition do you have? It shall be done."

13 Esther replied, "If the king is so inclined, let the Jews who are in Susa be permitted to act tomorrow also according to today's law, and let them hang the ten sons of Haman on the gallows."

14 So the king issued orders for this to be done. A law was passed in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. **15** The Jews who were in Susa then assembled on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they killed three hundred men in Susa. But they did not confiscate their property.

16 The rest of the Jews who were throughout the provinces of the king assembled in order to stand up for themselves and to have rest from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of their adversaries, but they did not confiscate their property. **17** All of this happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. They then rested on the fourteenth day and made it a day for banqueting and happiness.

18 But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth days, and rested on the fifteenth, making it a day for banqueting and happiness.

19 This is why the Jews who are in the rural country - those who live in rural cities - set aside the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a holiday for happiness, banqueting, holiday, and sending gifts to one another.

20 Mordecai wrote these matters down and sent letters to all the Jews who were throughout all the provinces of King

Ahasuerus, both near and far, **21** to have them observe the fourteenth and the fifteenth day of the month of Adar each year **22** as the time when the Jews gave themselves rest from their enemies - the month when their trouble was turned to happiness and their mourning to a holiday. These were to be days of banqueting, happiness, sending gifts to one another, and providing for the poor.

23 So the Jews committed themselves to continue what they had begun to do and to what Mordecai had written to them.

24 For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised plans against the Jews to destroy them. He had cast *pur* (that is, the lot) in order to afflict and destroy them. **25** But when the matter came to the king's attention, the king gave written orders that Haman's evil intentions that he had devised against the Jews should fall on his own head. He and his sons were hanged on the gallows. **26** For this reason these days are known as *Purim*, after the name of *pur*. **27** Therefore, because of the account found in this letter and what they had faced in this regard and what had happened to them, the Jews established as binding on themselves, their descendants, and all who joined their company that they should observe these two days without fail, just as written and at the appropriate time on an annual basis. **28** These days were to be remembered and to be celebrated in every generation and in every family, every province, and every city. The Jews were not to fail to observe these days of Purim; the remembrance of them was not to cease among their descendants.

29 So Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. **30** Letters were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus - words of true peace - **31** to establish these days of Purim in their proper times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established, and just as they had

established both for themselves and their descendants, matters pertaining to fasting and lamentation. **32** Esther's command established these matters of Purim, and the matter was officially recorded.

1 King Ahasuerus then imposed forced labor on the land and on the coastlands of the sea.

Guzik - Esther 10:1-3

Esther 10 - Mordecai's Promotion

A. Epilogue.

1. (1-2) The glory of the reign of King Ahasuerus.

And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea. Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king

advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

2. (3) Mordecai is promoted to the position of second in the kingdom.

For Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

B. Observations on the Book of Esther.

1. The Book of Esther shows how the hand of God can move in a supernaturally-natural way.

a. "It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle, and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power." (Spurgeon) b. Think of all that God arranged in the story of Esther:

- God arranged for the noble Queen Vashti to lose her place.
- God arranged for a competition to replace Queen Vashti.
- God arranged for Esther to enter the competition.

- God arranged special favor for Esther among the other women.
- God arranged for Mordecai to have access to both Esther and the affairs of the kingdom.
- God arranged the lot that was cast to give 11 months warning before the evil event (Est. 3:12-13).
- God arranged that the decree command that the Jews be killed by private hands, instead of by the army of Persia - which would have been much more difficult to stop.
- God arranged that Haman restrain his anger and not kill Mordecai immediately (Est. 5:10).
- God arranged for Esther to delay her request; first asking for a banquet with the king and then *another* banquet.
- God arranged for Haman's anger to come to a peak on one particular day.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to have a sleepless night.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to pick up a certain book in his sleepless night.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to read the passage about Mordecai in that particular book.

2. God's hand in history never rules out our actions.

The actions of Esther and Mordecai were critical to the preservation of the people of God.

a. God's will is accomplished, and yet men are perfectly free agents; Haman did as he pleased, Ahasuerus did what he wanted, so did Mordecai and Esther. We see no interference, no coercion

- they all do their will, and bear full

responsibility, yet God works out His eternal plan for the ages through it all.

b. "There it is; man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions, and verily guilty when he does wrong, and he will be justly punished too, and if he be lost the blame will rest with himself alone: but yet there is One who ruleth over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to subserve his holy and righteous purposes.

Believe these two truths and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for

harmonizing them on paper." (Spurgeon) 3. God, in His wise and Providential plan, allows His people to be tested - sometimes severely so. We must not suppose that the servants of God will be protected from every trial, because the trials are part of God's design.

· It was a great trial for Mordecai; he refused to bow to Haman and *others* would suffer for his refusal to pay homage to Haman.

· It was a great trial for Esther; she heard the news of the coming slaughter of her people, and had to boldly approach the king to make an appeal.

4. "Last of all, let each child of God rejoice that *we have a guardian so near the throne*. Every Jew in Shushan must have felt hope when he remembered that the queen was a Jewess. To-day let us be glad that Jesus is exalted." (Spurgeon)

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2 Now all the actions carried out under his authority and his great achievements, along with an exact statement concerning the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king promoted, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? **3** Mordecai the Jew was

second only to King Ahasuerus. He was the highest-ranking Jew, and he was admired by his numerous relatives. He worked enthusiastically for the good of his people and was an advocate for the welfare of all his descendants.